CHATURANG KATHA

Kathasaritsagara

SUNDARASENA

No. 507

PICTORIAL CLASSICS FOR YOUNG AND OLD

Rs. 2

CHATURANG KATHA

Sundarasena sets out across the seas to meet his future bride, princess Mandaravati of Hamsadvipa. Mandaravati, impatient to be near her future husband, also sets out from Hamsadvipa. Many adventures follow, keeping the reader in delightful suspense.

Sundarasena reads like any action-packed thriller of today, but is in fact a tale that held a royal household spellbound nine centuries ago. It is part of the famous *Kathasaritsagara*, written in the 11th century by Somadeva, the court poet of Kashmir.

"Paper used for the printing of this book was made available by the Government of India at concessional rates."

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SUNDARASENA, SON OF KING MAHASENA OF NISHADA, WAS THE PRIDE AND JOY OF HIS PARENTS, FOR HE WAS BLESSED IN ABUNDANCE WITH ALL THE PRINCELY VIRTUES.

THE TIME HAD COME FOR SUNDARASENA TO TAKE A BRIDE.

I WONDER WHY THE PRINCE IS STILL UNMARRIED.

NATURE HAS MARKED HIM OUT AS HER SPECIAL FAVOURITE. IT WILL BE HARD TO FIND A GIRL WORTHY OF HIM.

ONE MORNING, ON HIS WAY TO A HUNT, A FEMALE ASCETIC HAILED HIM–

VICTORY TO THEE!

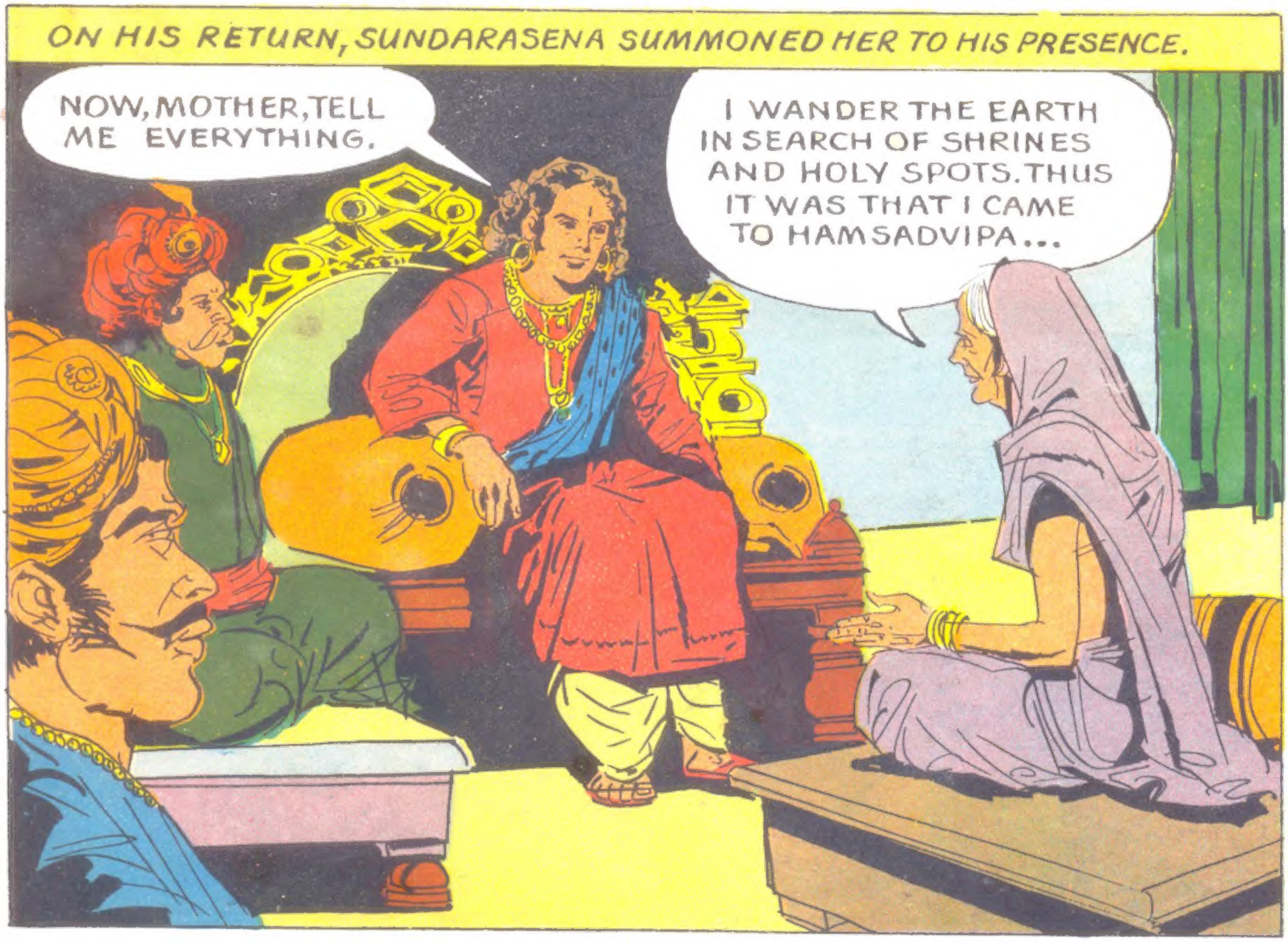
THE WORDS FELL ON DEAF EARS, FOR SUNDARASENA WAS BUSY TALKING TO HIS COMPANIONS.

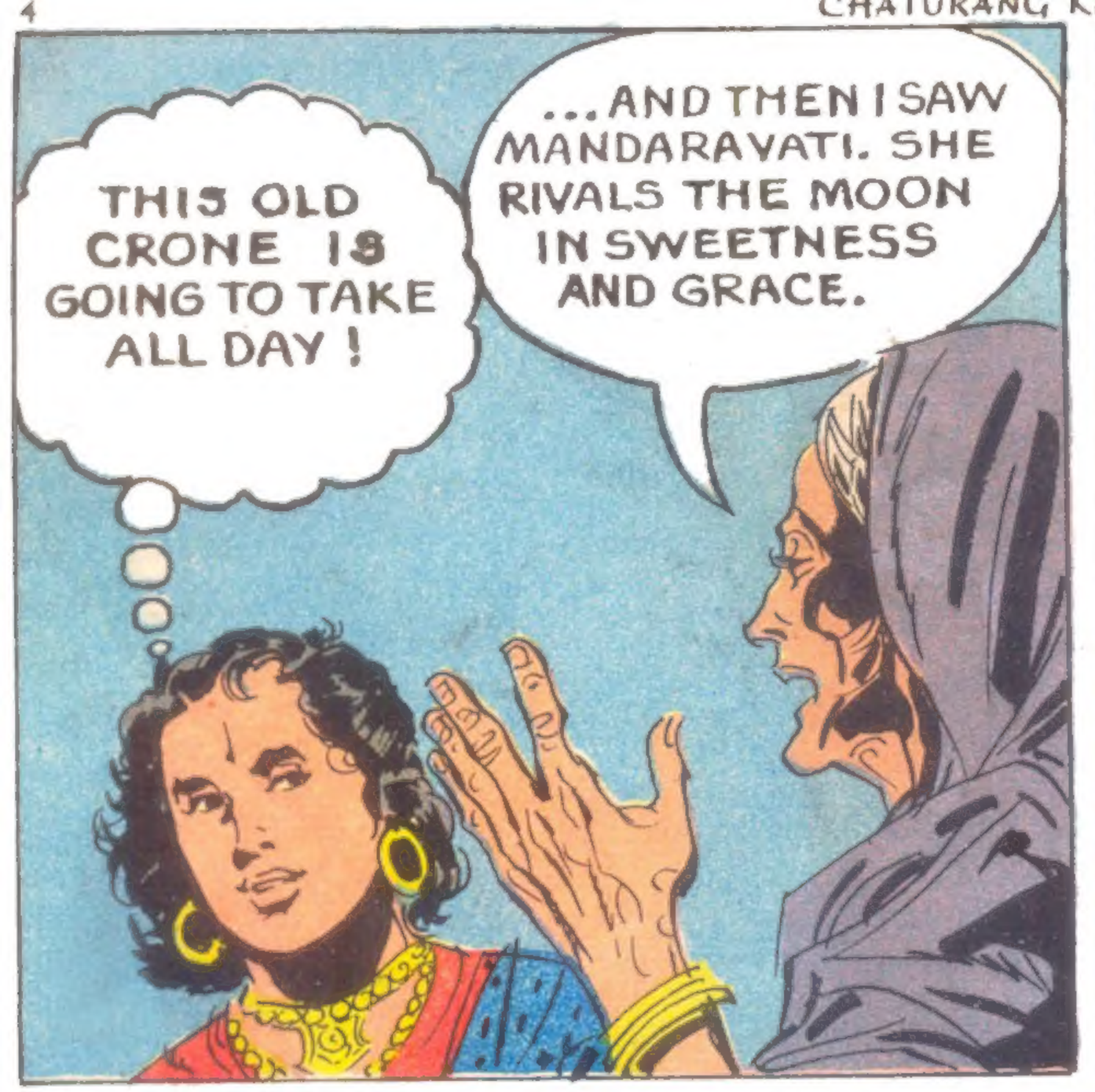
THE OLD WOMAN FELT SLIGHTED.

IF YOU WERE MARRIED TO MANDARAVATI, YOU WOULD NOT HEAR LORD SHIVA HIMSELF!

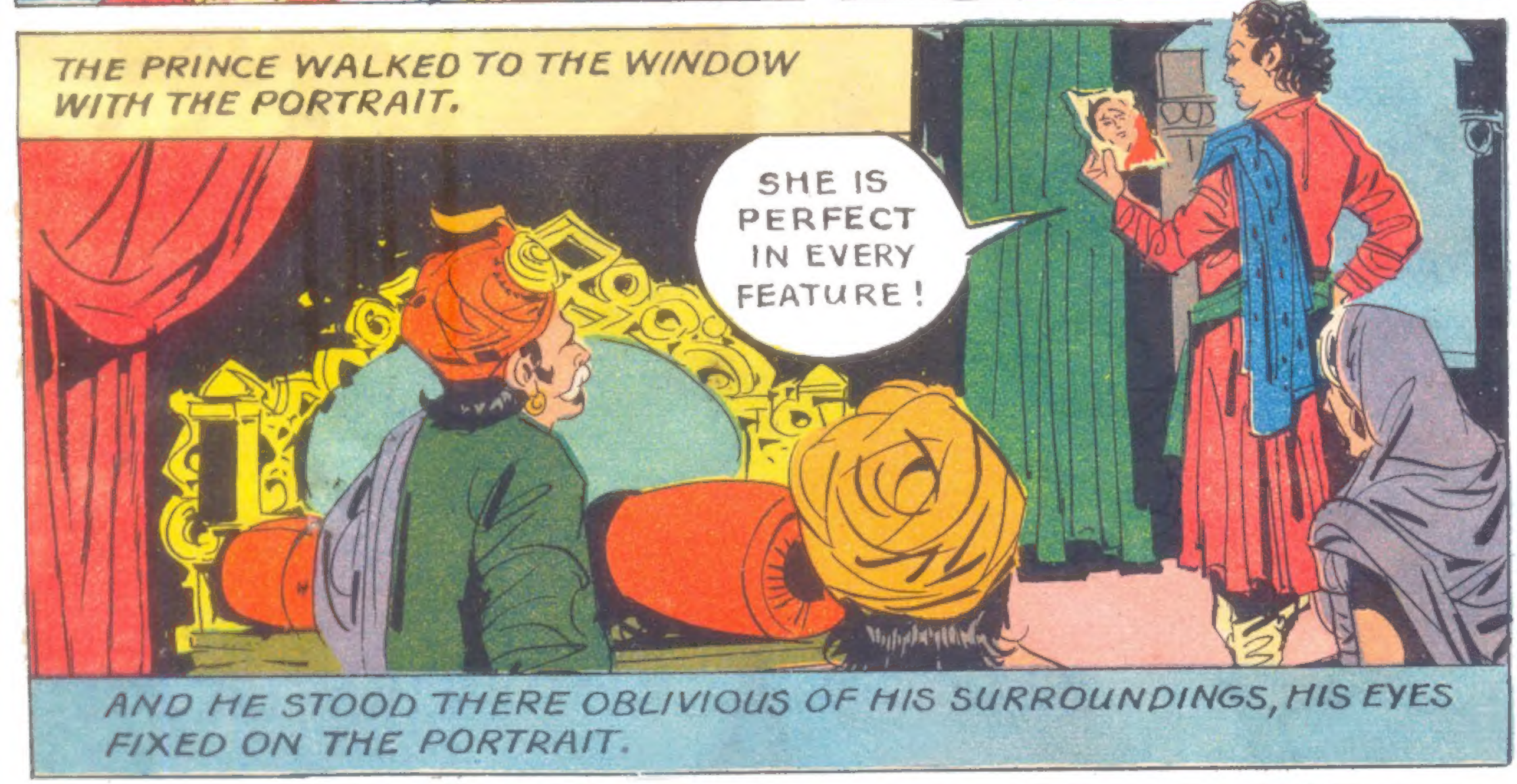
THE PRINCE WAS AMUSED. HE WAS ALSO CURIOUS.
I AM SORRY, MOTHER. YOU MUST TELL ME ALL ABOUT MANDARAVATI. BUT FIRST, I MUST FINISH MY HUNT.

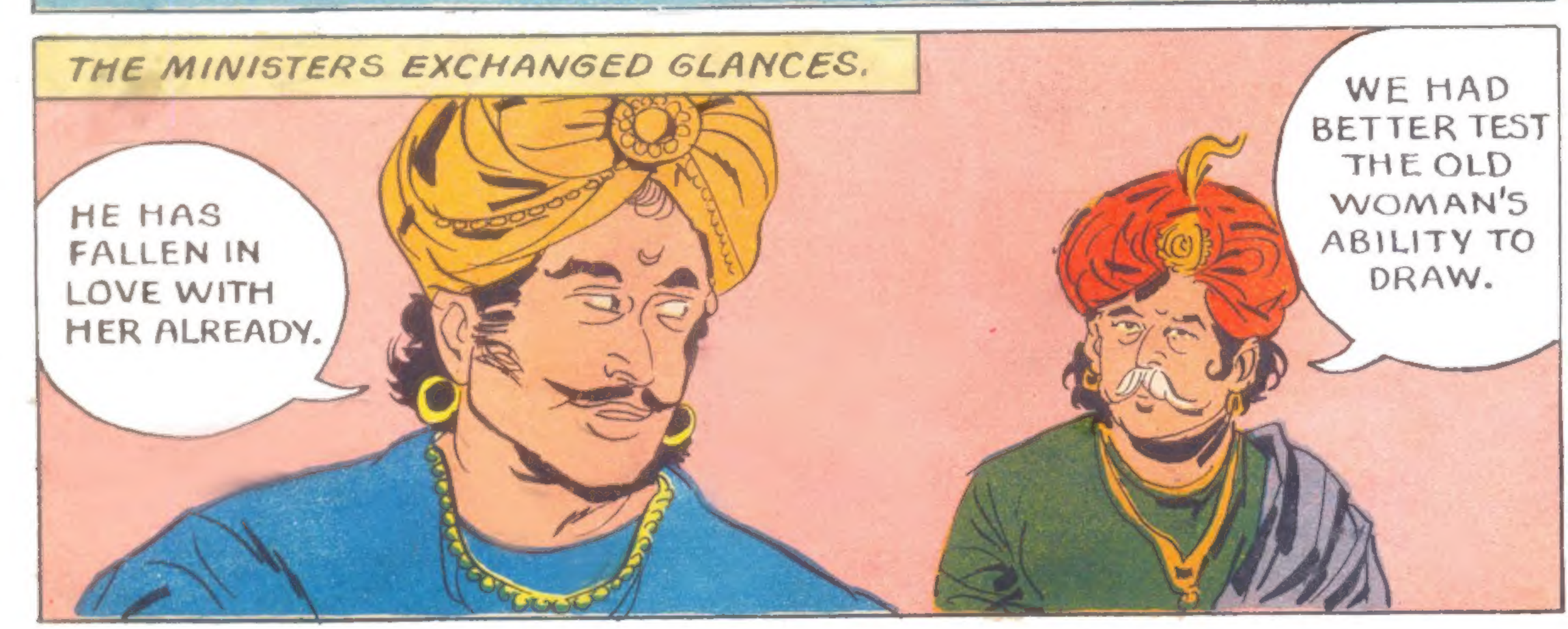
THE PRINCE TURNED TO ONE OF HIS COMPANIONS.
SEE THAT SHE IS FED AND ENTERTAINED. I WILL BE BACK SHORTLY.


ON HIS RETURN, SUNDARASENA SUMMONED HER TO HIS PRESENCE.
NOW, MOTHER, TELL ME EVERYTHING.
I WANDER THE EARTH IN SEARCH OF SHRINES AND HOLY SPOTS. THUS IT WAS THAT I CAME TO HAMSADVIPA...

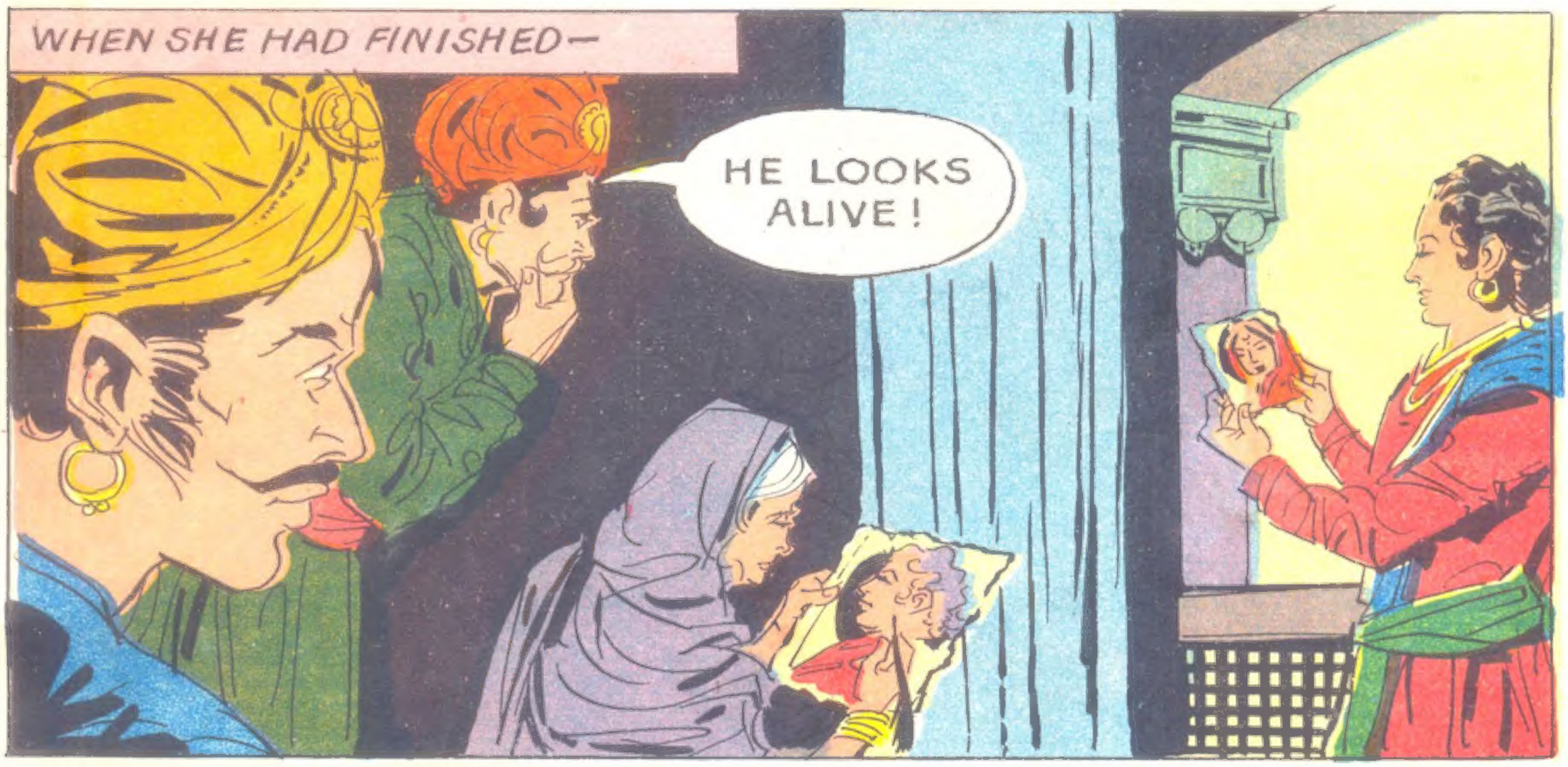

THIS OLD CRONE IS GOING TO TAKE ALL DAY!
...AND THEN I SAW MANDARAVATI. SHE RIVALS THE MOON IN SWEETNESS AND GRACE.

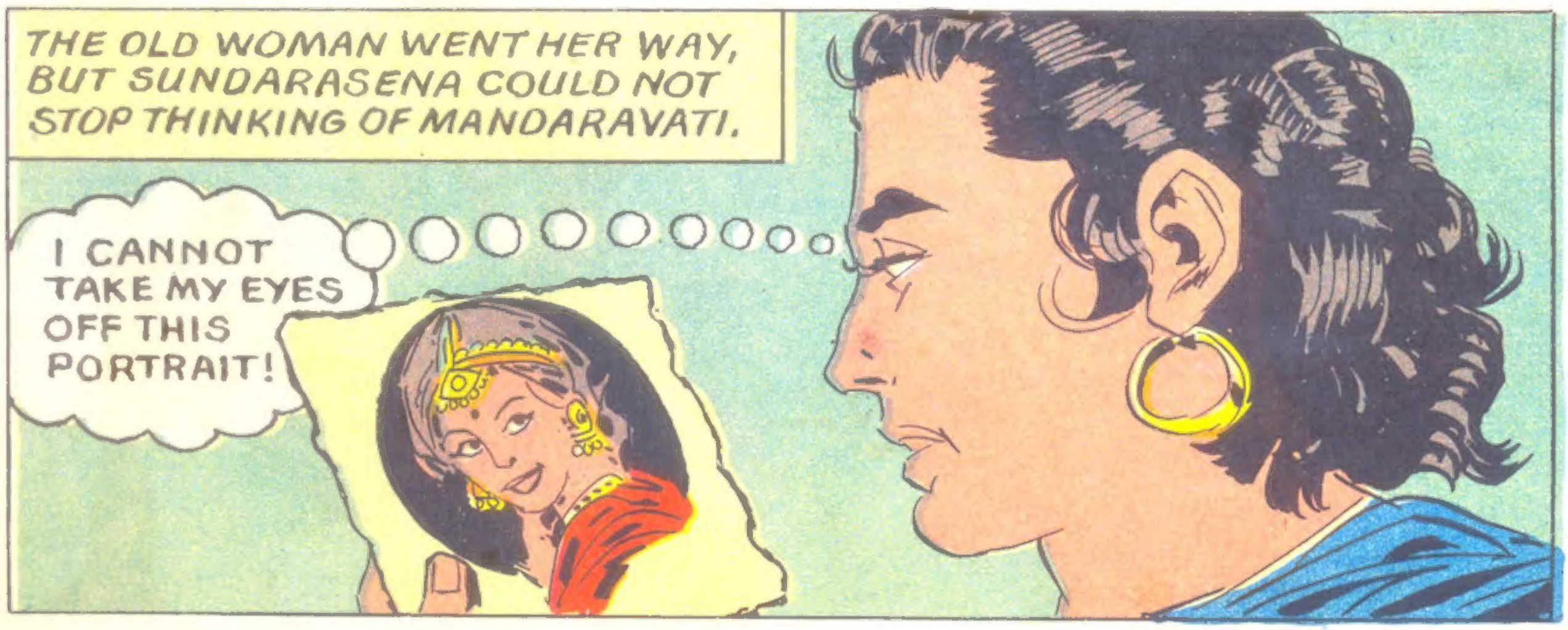
THE OLD WOMAN RUMMAGED IN HER BAG.
YOU SEE, I PAINT. HERE IS A FAITHFUL LIKENESS OF HER.


THE PRINCE WALKED TO THE WINDOW WITH THE PORTRAIT.
SHE IS PERFECT IN EVERY FEATURE!
AND HE STOOD THERE OBLIVIOUS OF HIS SURROUNDINGS, HIS EYES FIXED ON THE PORTRAIT.


THE MINISTERS EXCHANGED GLANCES.
HE HAS FALLEN IN LOVE WITH HER ALREADY.
WE HAD BETTER TEST THE OLD WOMAN'S ABILITY TO DRAW.

THEY TURNED TO THE OLD WOMAN.
HERE YOU SEE OUR PRINCE. DRAW US A PICTURE OF HIM.
I WILL.
THEY WANT TO TEST MY SKILL IN DRAWING!


WHEN SHE HAD FINISHED—
HE LOOKS ALIVE!


THE OLD WOMAN WENT HER WAY, BUT SUNDARASENA COULD NOT STOP THINKING OF MANDARAVATI.
I CANNOT TAKE MY EYES OFF THIS PORTRAIT!

THE KING AND QUEEN CAME TO KNOW OF THEIR SON'S STATE OF MIND, AND THE REASONS FOR IT.

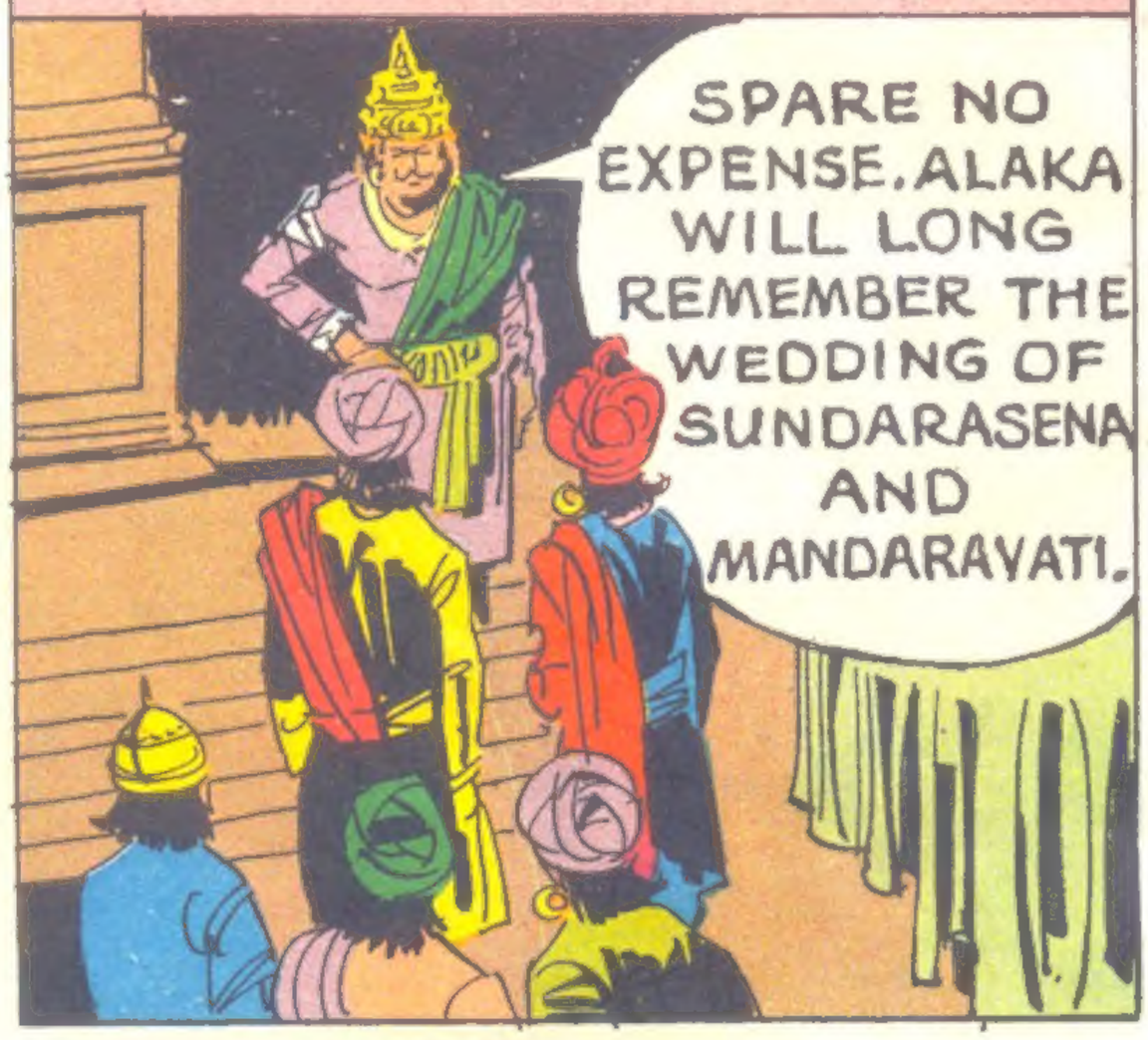
WHAT YOU DESIRE CAN BE EASILY ARRANGED.

FATHER, WASTE NO TIME. I WANT TO MARRY HER.

AN AMBASSADOR WAS SENT TO HAMSADVIPA AND THE MATTER FULLY EXPLAINED. KING MANDARADEVA, HIS QUEEN AND MANDARAVATI WERE MORE THAN PLEASED AT THE IDEA.

WHEN THE NEWS REACHED ALAKA, THE ROYAL ASTROLOGERS WERE CONSULTED.

THE KING MADE GREAT PLANS.



IN HAMSADVIPA, MANDARAVATI PINED FOR HER FUTURE HUSBAND.

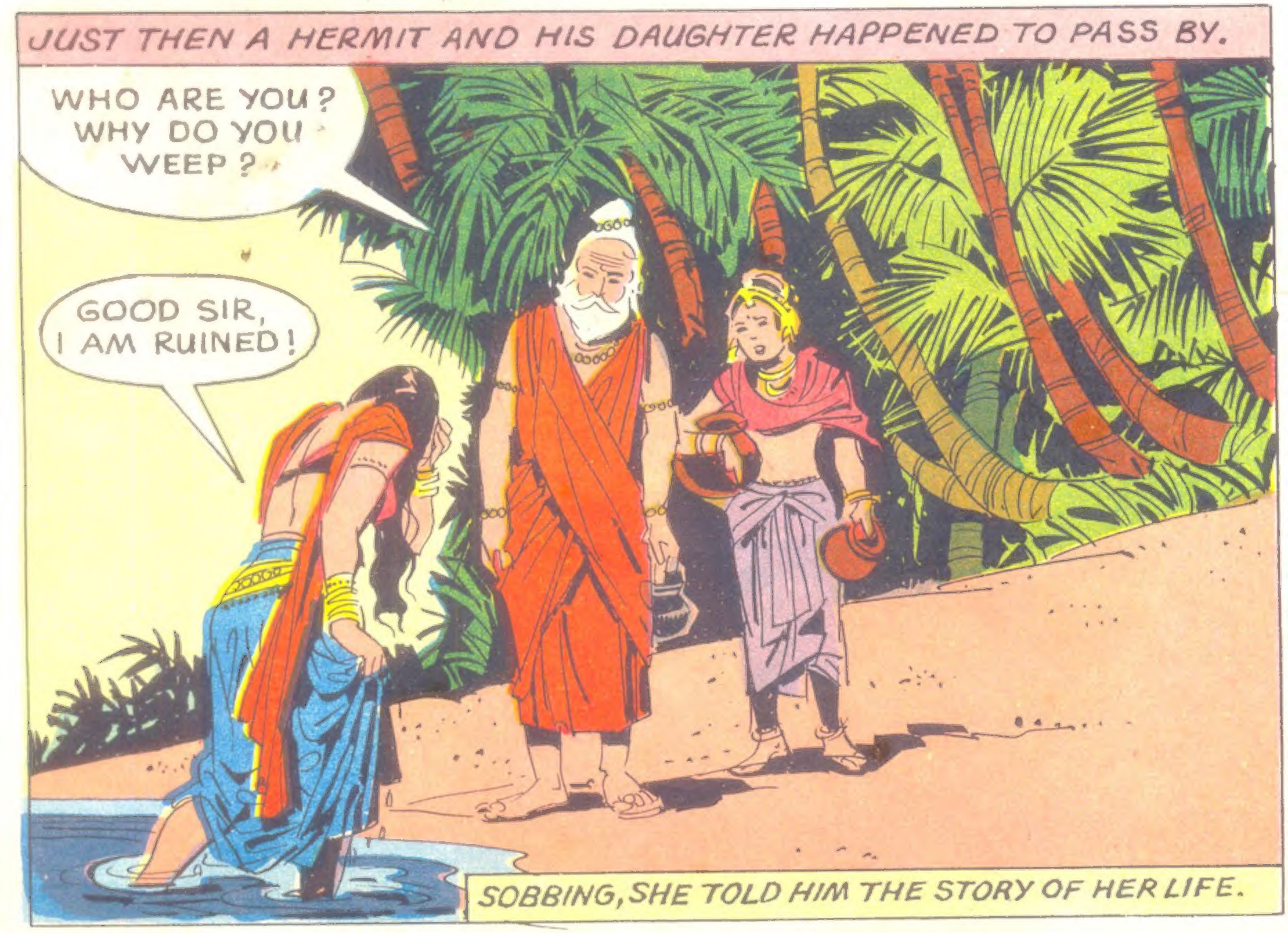
THEY HAD NOT GONE FAR WHEN—

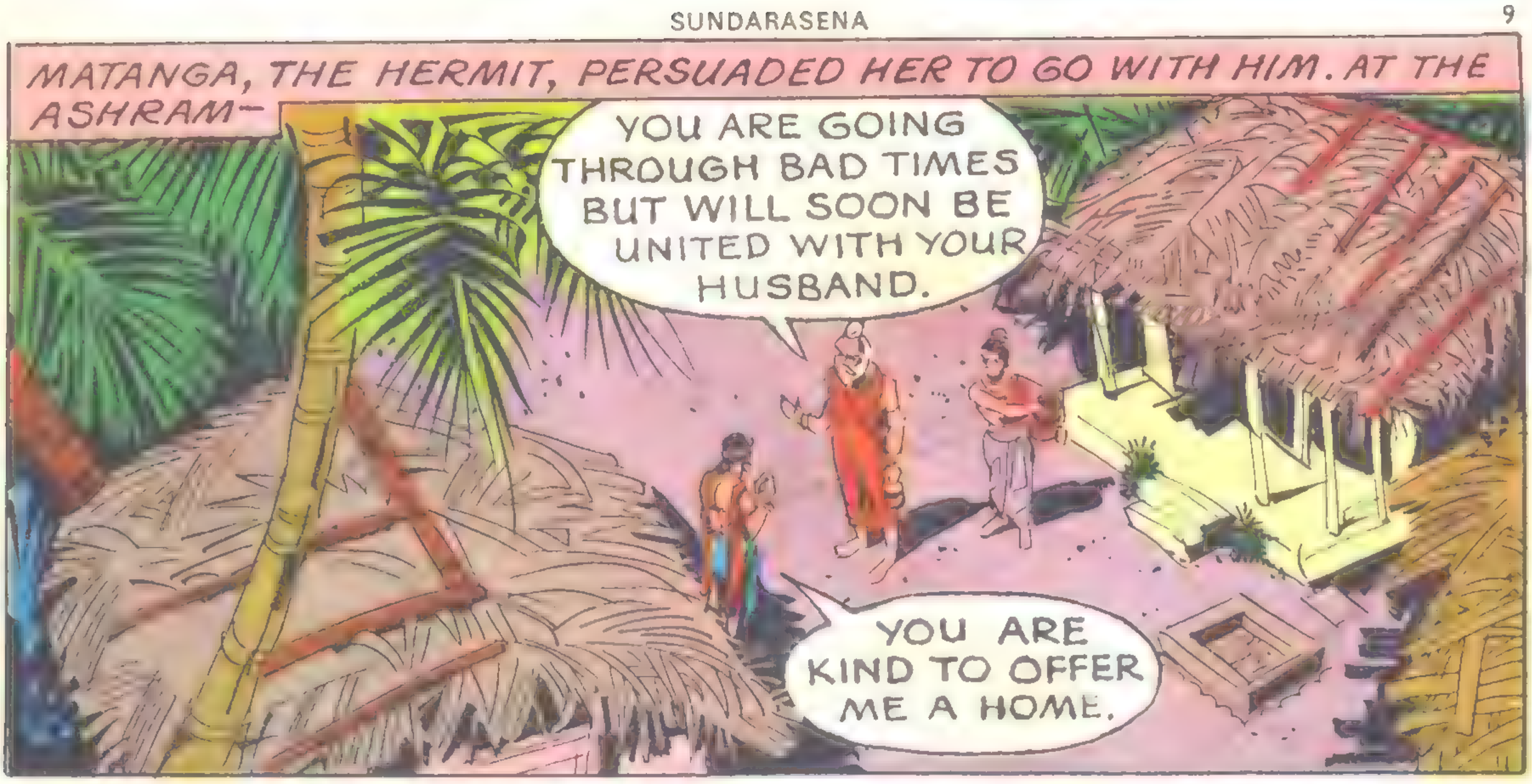
THE WAVES LASH AT THE SHIP SO FIERCELY!

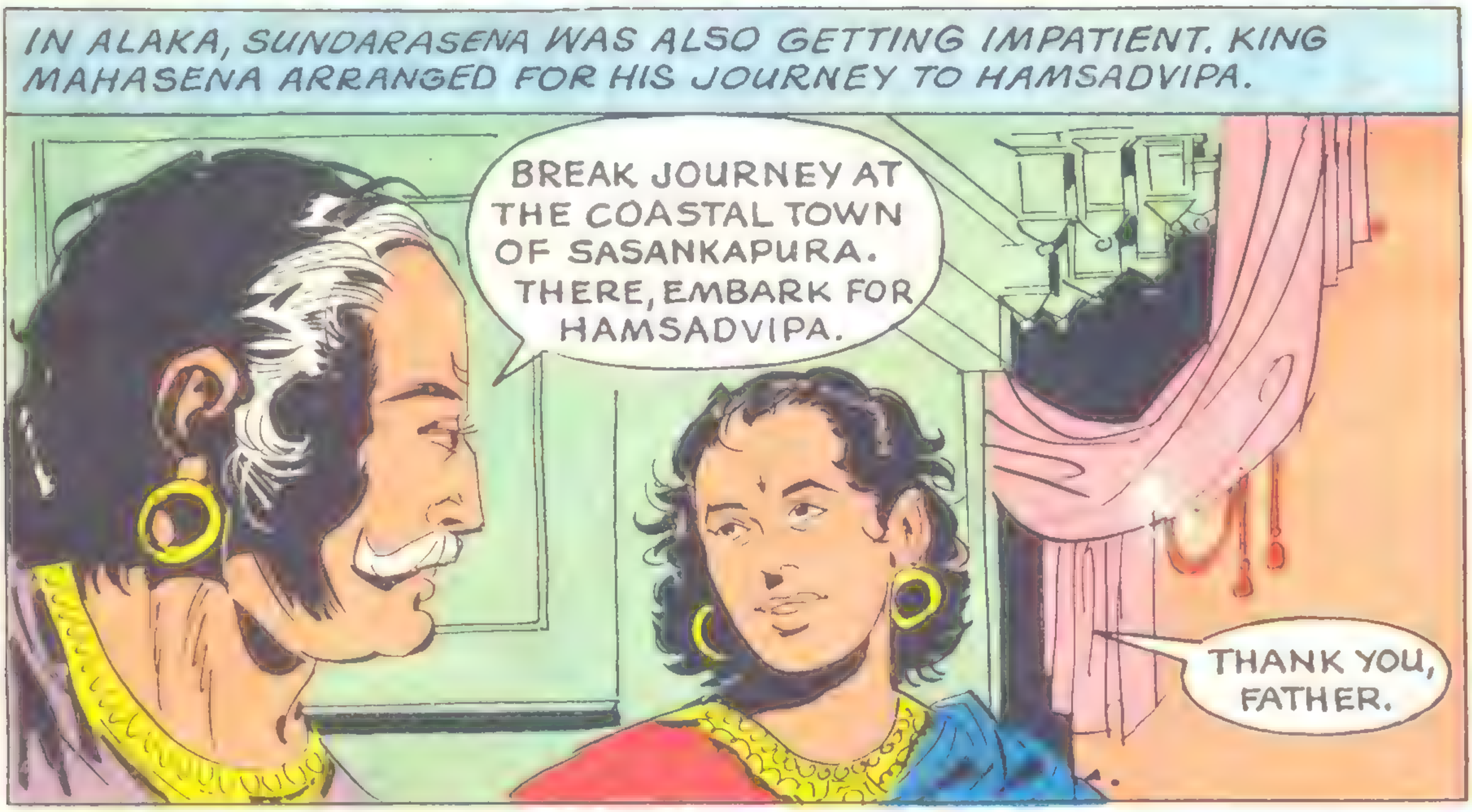
THE SHIP CANNOT HOLD OUT MUCH LONGER.

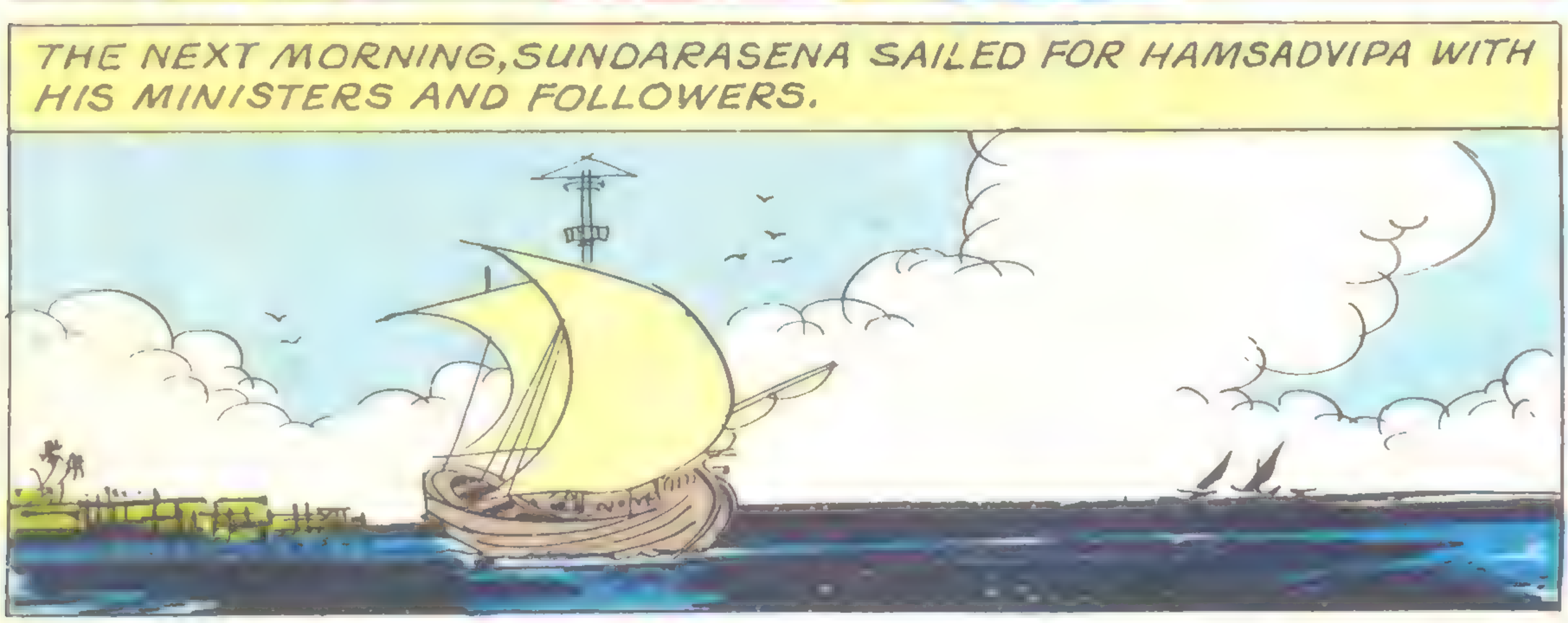
THE STORM BROKE, DESTROYING THE SHIP AND KILLING MANDARAVATI'S ESCORT.
SAVE ME!

A HUGE WAVE WASHED HER ASHORE.
I AM UNDONE. I WILL SOON BE A PREY TO WILD BEASTS!


JUST THEN A HERMIT AND HIS DAUGHTER HAPPENED TO PASS BY.
WHO ARE YOU? WHY DO YOU WEEP?
GOOD SIR, I AM RUINED!
SOBBING, SHE TOLD HIM THE STORY OF HER LIFE.


MATANGA, THE HERMIT, PERSUADED HER TO GO WITH HIM. AT THE ASHRAM–
YOU ARE GOING THROUGH BAD TIMES BUT WILL SOON BE UNITED WITH YOUR HUSBAND.
YOU ARE KIND TO OFFER ME A HOME.


IN ALAKA, SUNDARASENA WAS ALSO GETTING IMPATIENT. KING MAHASENA ARRANGED FOR HIS JOURNEY TO HAMSADVIPA.
BREAK JOURNEY AT THE COASTAL TOWN OF SASANKAPURA. THERE, EMBARK FOR HAMSADVIPA.
THANK YOU, FATHER.


THE NEXT MORNING, SUNDARASENA SAILED FOR HAMSADVIPA WITH HIS MINISTERS AND FOLLOWERS.

ALL WENT WELL FOR TWO OR THREE DAYS. THEN—
THE SEA IS THREATENING TO SWALLOW US!
I HAVE NEVER SEEN SUCH FURY OF THE ELEMENTS.
THE CREW WAS IN A PANIC. AS THE SHIP ROLLED FROM SIDE TO SIDE—
LET SOME STONES DOWN ON CHAINS. NEED TO KEL THIS SIDE DOWN.
RUN TO THE OTHER SIDE WITH MORE STONES. QUICK, OR WE WILL GO UNDER!

THEY EVEN TRIED TO APPEASE THE SEA GODS BY OFFERING JEWELS.
TAKE THIS GOLD, THESE PEARLS, BUT SAVE OUR SHIP!
BUT THE STORM CONTINUED, UNABATED.
SUNDARASENA TURNED TO HIS FRIENDS-
THIS IS RETRIBUTION FOR MY PAST SINS. YOU ARE SUFFERING BECAUSE OF ME.
SAYING THIS, HE JUMPED INTO THE SEA IN ORDER TO END HIS LIFE.
WE CANNOT STAND BY WHILE OUR PRINCE DIES!

THEY WERE ALL CARRIED AWAY IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS BY THE CHURNING SEA. SUDDENLY THERE WAS A LULL. SUNDARASENA AND ONE OF HIS FRIENDS FLOATED ON A CALM SEA. THEN—

THERE GOES A SHIP. LET US SWIM TO IT.

THE SHIP HAD NO CREW AND NO PASSENGERS.

IT MUST HAVE BEEN BROUGHT HERE BY THE FORCE OF THE STORM.

LET US STEER IT LANDWARDS.

THEY DRIFTED AIMLESSLY.
I HAVE LOST ALL INTEREST IN LIFE.
TAKE HEART, MY PRINCE. WE WILL SOON STRIKE LAND.

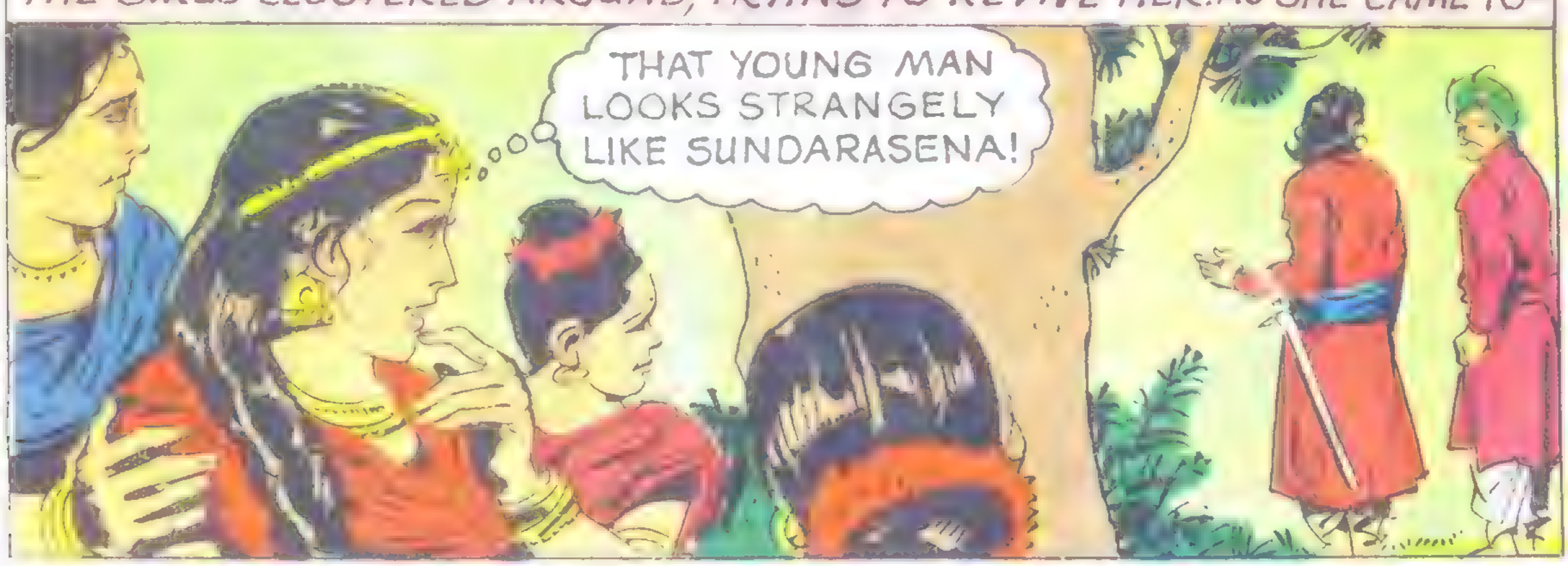
LAND IN SIGHT, SUNDARASENA!
WE MIGHT AS WELL GO INLAND AND EXPLORE.

AS THEY PENETRATED INLAND, THEY CAME ACROSS TWO HERMITS. ON HEARING OF THEIR MISADVENTURE—
ONLY RIGHT THINKING AND RIGHT LIVING CAN ALTER THE COURSE OF EVENTS.
THROW OFF THIS MEANINGLESS DESPAIR AND COME WITH US.

AND SO THEY STAYED IN THE HERMITAGE. ONE DAY—
THAT MAIDEN, CAN IT BE... I CAN'T BELIEVE MY EYES.

SHE IS CERTAINLY NO RUSTIC BEAUTY. HER LOOKS AND MANNER SPEAK OF CITIES AND PALACES.

WHILE THEY STOOD WATCHING—
HELP! HELP! A CROCODILE.
O SAVE OUR SWEET COMPANION! WE ARE HELPLESS.



THEY TOLD HIM THE STORY OF THE SHIPWRECK AND ALL THAT FOLLOWED, AND WENT THEIR WAY.

THE PRINCE COULD NOT CONTAIN HIS JOY. THEY WENT TO MATANGA'S HERMITAGE.

REVERED SIR, I AM SUNDARASENA. I WAS ON MY WAY...

BEFORE HE COULD FINISH—

MY BELOVED...

SOON, WITH MATANGA'S BLESSING, THEY DECIDED TO LEAVE FOR ALAKA.

SHIPS FREQUENTLY PASS THIS WAY. YOU CAN GET ON TO ONE OF THOSE.

THEY DID NOT HAVE TO WAIT LONG. A SHIP SOON CAME BY.
WE SEEK A PASSAGE TO ALAKA. WILL YOU TAKE US?
MOST GLADLY.
I MUST HAVE HER! THIS HANDSOME FOOL DOESN'T SUSPECT MY PLOT.
TURNING TO SUNDARASENA—
LET THE LADY COME ABOARD FIRST.
BEFORE SUNDARASENA COULD FOLLOW—
STEER AWAY! I HAVE GOT THE PASSENGER I WANTED.
AH! SUNDARASENA I HAVE LOST YOU AGAIN!

GRIEF SWEPT OVER HIM LIKE A RAGING SEA. HIS FRIEND TRIED TO CONSOLE HIM.

YOU MUST NOT GIVE IN TO THIS UNMANLY SORROW.

BUT SUNDARASENA WAS INCONSOLABLE.

MANDARAVATI, ALL THAT I SEE REMINDS ME OF YOU. THE BLOWN LOTUSES ON THE LAKE ARE YOUR GLANCES; BIRD-SONG IS YOUR VOICE, SWEET AS HONEY.

THEIR TROUBLES WERE NOT OVER. VINDHAYAKETU, KING OF THE PULINDAS*, WAS PREPARING FOR A HUMAN SACRIFICE TO DURGA. HIS BANDITS LAY IN WAIT FOR VICTIMS.

THERE GO TWO MEN. WE MUST CATCH THEM.

*A BANDIT TRIBE

WHEN VINDHYAKETU HEARD OF THIS—

WE NEED MORE VICTIMS FOR THE SACRIFICE. THESE TWO SEEM VERY SPECIAL. WE CAN'T LET THEM ESCAPE!

SUNDARASENA AND HIS FRIEND WERE OVERCOME BY THE BANDITS.

BIND THEM HAND AND FOOT!

THEY WERE TAKEN TO A PRISON ROOM FULL OF CAPTIVES. THERE, THEY SPOTTED TWO OF THEIR COMPANIONS.

OUR FRIENDS!

SUNDARASENA!

IT WAS A SAD REUNION, FOR THEY WERE WAITING TO DIE.

ON THE DAY OF THE SACRIFICE, SUNDARASENA WAS TAKEN TO THE TEMPLE OF DURGA.

O GODDESS, PROTECT ME FROM EVIL, YOU WHO ARE MY ONLY REFUGE!

AS HE FINISHED PRAYING, VINDHYAKETU ARRIVED TO WORSHIP AT THE SHRINE.

WHY, THIS IS VINDHYAKETU WHO USED TO SEEK MY FATHER'S FAVOUR! BUT PRIDE PREVENTS ME....

THIS YOUNG MAN MUST BE...

THE BANDIT KING WENT UP TO HIM.

WHO ARE YOU, YOUNG MAN?

WHAT DOES IT MATTER WHO I AM? PLEASE GO AHEAD AND SACRIFICE ME.

THE SOUND OF SUNDARASENA'S VOICE CLEARED ALL HIS DOUBTS.

I AM A WRETCH TO REPAY YOUR FATHER'S KINDNESS THUS!

VINDHYAKETU BEGGED HIS PARDON REPEATEDLY.
FORGIVE ME!
I FORGIVE YOU ON ONE CONDITION–YOU MUST RELEASE ALL YOUR VICTIMS.
MOST GLADLY.
VINDHYAKETU TOOK HIM HOME AND TENDED TO HIS WOUNDS. THEN–
TELL ME–WHAT BROUGHT YOU HERE?
I SET OUT FROM ALAKA MANY DAYS AGO...
VINDHYAKETU SAT SPELL-BOUND, LISTENING TO THE STORY OF HIS ADVENTURES.

DESTINY HAS DELIVERED YOU FROM DEATH TWICE. I AM SURE SHE WILL SOON BRING YOU TO MANDARAVATI.

ALMOST IMMEDIATELY AFTER –
WE HAVE SEIZED A WEALTHY MERCHANT. WITH HIM IS A BEAUTIFUL GIRL.

THE SAME THOUGHT PASSED THROUGH BOTH THEIR MINDS.
CAN IT BE...?
I WONDER...

THEY HAD GUESSED RIGHT–BEFORE THEM STOOD MANDARAVATI AND THE MERCHANT. SUNDARASENA GATHERED HER INTO HIS ARMS.

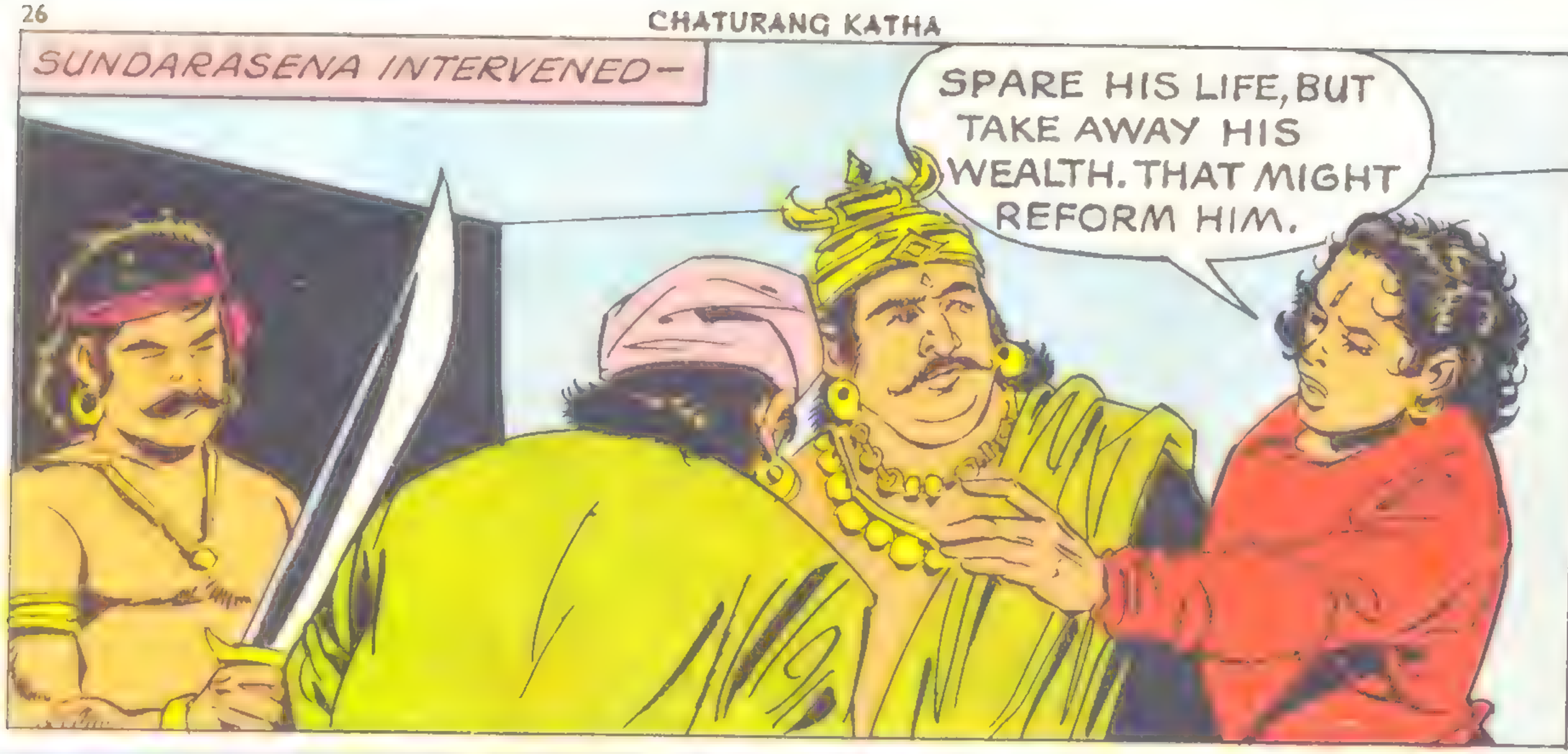
MY QUEEN, HOW WAN YOU LOOK! YOU CAN BARELY STAND!

VINDHYAKETU TURNED TO THE MERCHANT. HIS VOICE WAS STERN, HIS EXPRESSION FORBIDDING.

...BUT HER VIRTUE WAS HER PROTECTION. I COULD NO MORE TOUCH HER THAN IF SHE WERE A FLAME OF FIRE.

YOUR CRIME WAS DREADFUL. YOUR PUNISHMENT MUST BE SEVERE.
I HAVE NOTHING TO SAY FOR MYSELF.

THERE IS ONLY ONE PUNISHMENT FOR BLACKGUARDS LIKE HIM. OFF WITH HIS HEAD!

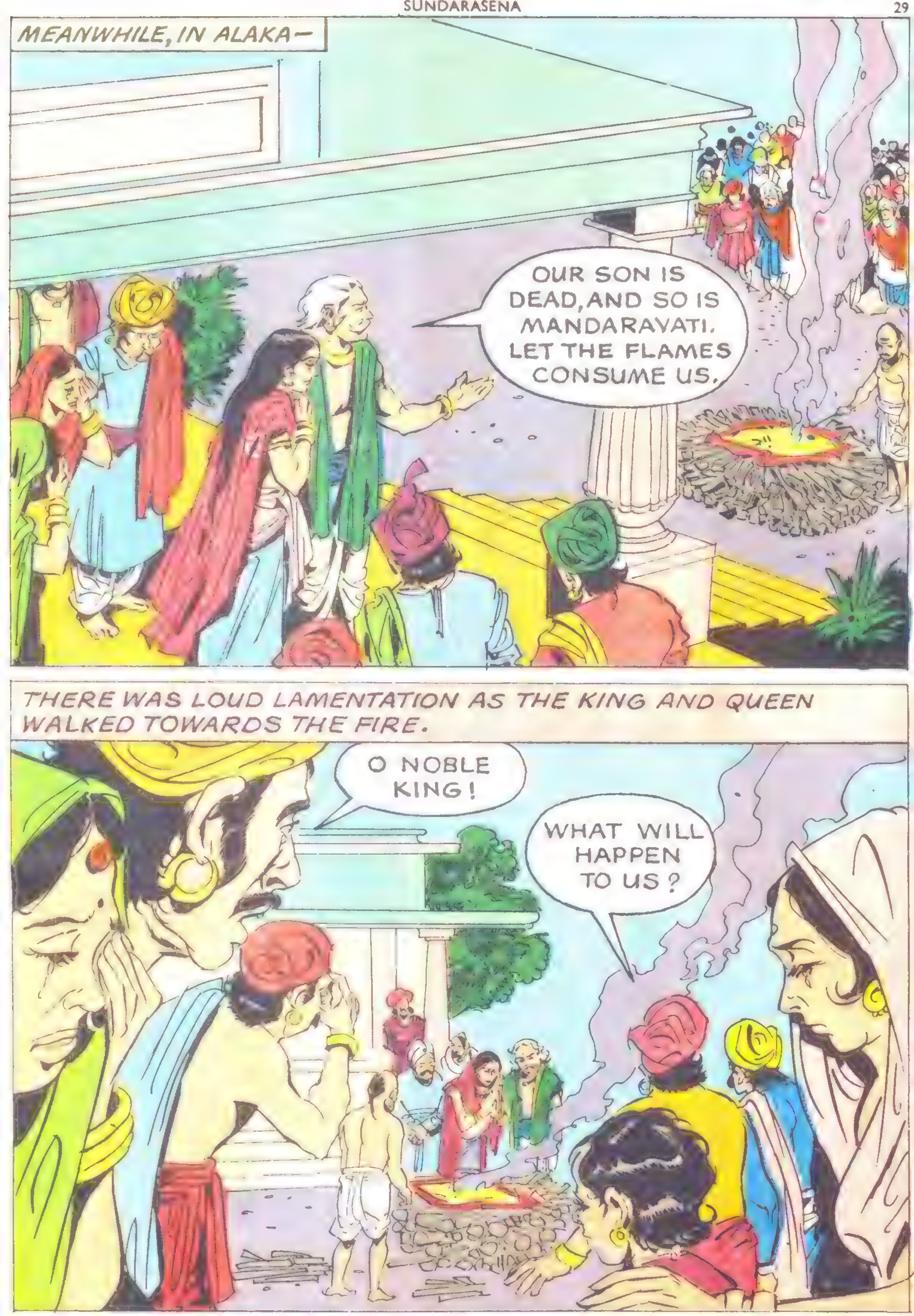

SUNDARASENA INTERVENED—
SPARE HIS LIFE, BUT TAKE AWAY HIS WEALTH. THAT MIGHT REFORM HIM.

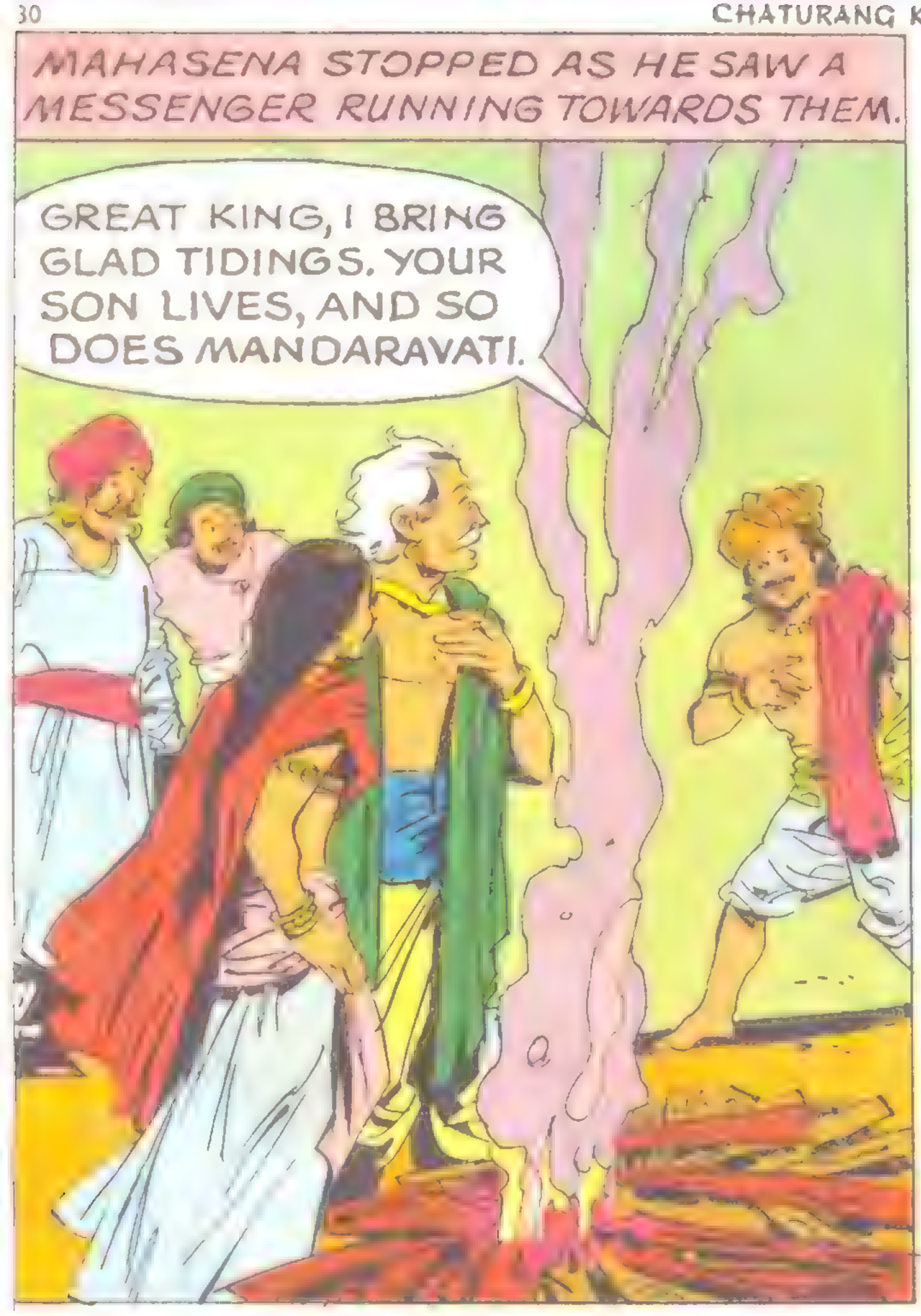
MANDARAVATI WAS TAKEN TO THE QUEEN'S APARTMENTS.
LAY OUT THINGS FOR HER BATH. GIVE HER FRESH CLOTHES AND JEWELS.

SUNDARASENA TOO WAS TAKEN TO VINDHYAKETU'S PRIVATE APARTMENTS.
BRING HIM CLOTHES AND ORNAMENTS FIT FOR A KING.
SUNDARASENA WAS NEXT LED TO A GREAT HALL.
ASCEND THE THRONE. WE WILL HONOUR YOU WITH OUR HOMAGE AND HOSPITALITY.

AND THEN THE PEOPLE CAME TO SUNDARASENA, BEARING COSTLY GIFTS.

SUNDARASENA WAS DEEPLY TOUCHED.


MEANWHILE, IN ALAKA—
OUR SON IS DEAD, AND SO IS MANDARAVATI. LET THE FLAMES CONSUME US.
THERE WAS LOUD LAMENTATION AS THE KING AND QUEEN WALKED TOWARDS THE FIRE.
O NOBLE KING!
WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO US?


MAHASENA STOPPED AS HE SAW A MESSENGER RUNNING TOWARDS THEM.
GREAT KING, I BRING GLAD TIDINGS. YOUR SON LIVES, AND SO DOES MANDARAVATI.

THE PEOPLE RAISED A GREAT SHOUT OF JOY.
WHERE IS OUR PRINCE ?

AS THE MESSENGER GAVE THE KING ALL THE DETAILS—
I MUST RIDE OUT TO MEET MY SON.
I MUST PREPARE MANDARAVATI'S ROOMS.

THEY MET OUTSIDE ALAKA–

FATHER, HERE IS MANDARAVATI, DEARER TO ME THAN LIFE!

BLESS YOU, CHILD. MAY YOU BRING PEACE AND PROSPERITY TO NISHADA!

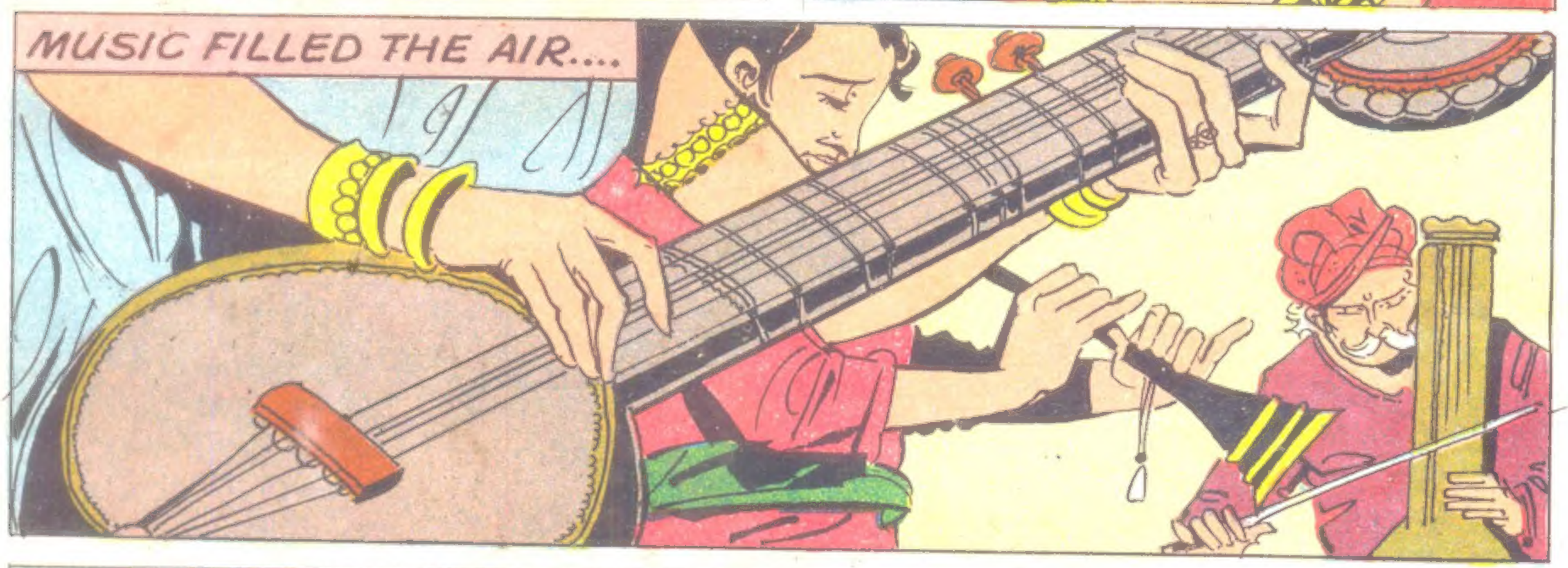
SUNDARASENA THEN RODE THROUGH THE STREETS OF ALAKA. THE WOMEN LOOKED ON IN WONDER AND THE MEN CHEERED.

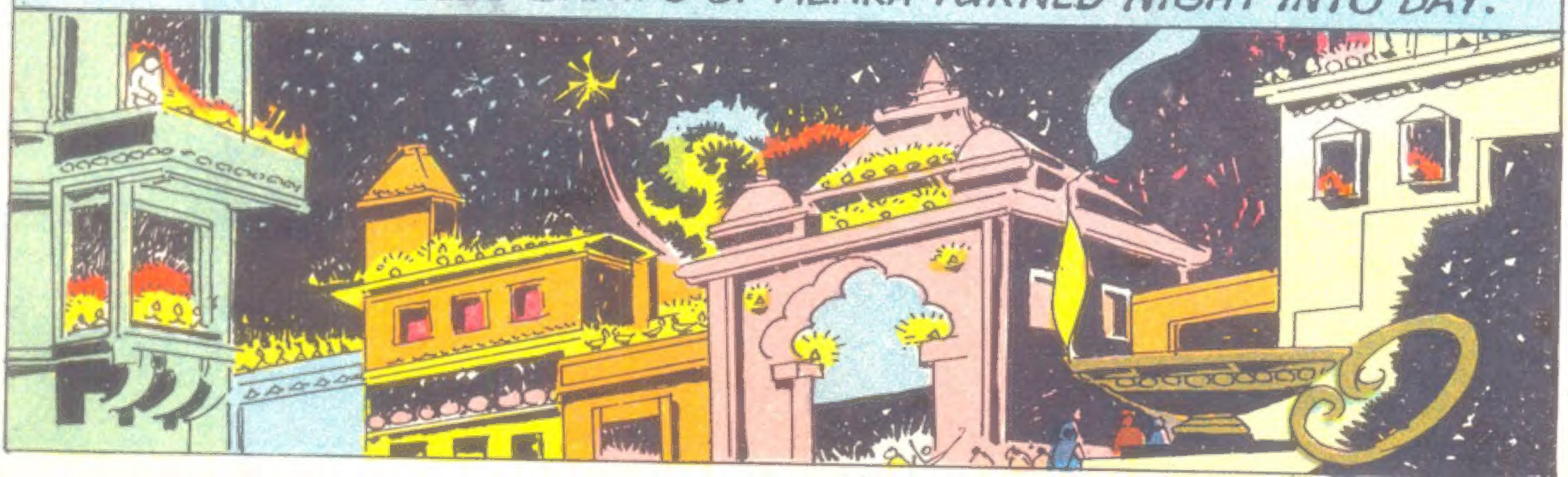
LONG LIVE SUNDARASENA!

WHO IS MORE SPLENDID–THE PRINCE OR THE PRINCESS?

THE NEXT DAY, AS THE FATES HAD ORDAINED AND THE ASTROLOGERS FORETOLD, SUNDARASENA RECEIVED THE HAND OF MANDARAVATI IN MARRIAGE.

THE ROYAL WEDDING WAS FOLLOWED BY A CORONATION. SUNDARASENA WAS CROWNED KING OF NISHADA.


MUSIC FILLED THE AIR....


...AND THE JEWELLED LAMPS OF ALAKA TURNED NIGHT INTO DAY.

HERE'S HOW MY DADDY LOOKS...

WHEN HE'S SEEING MY REPORT CARD...

WHEN HE'S HAPPY...

WHEN I BREAK A WINDOW PANE...

WHEN I FRIGHTEN HIM WITH A MASK OVER MY FACE...

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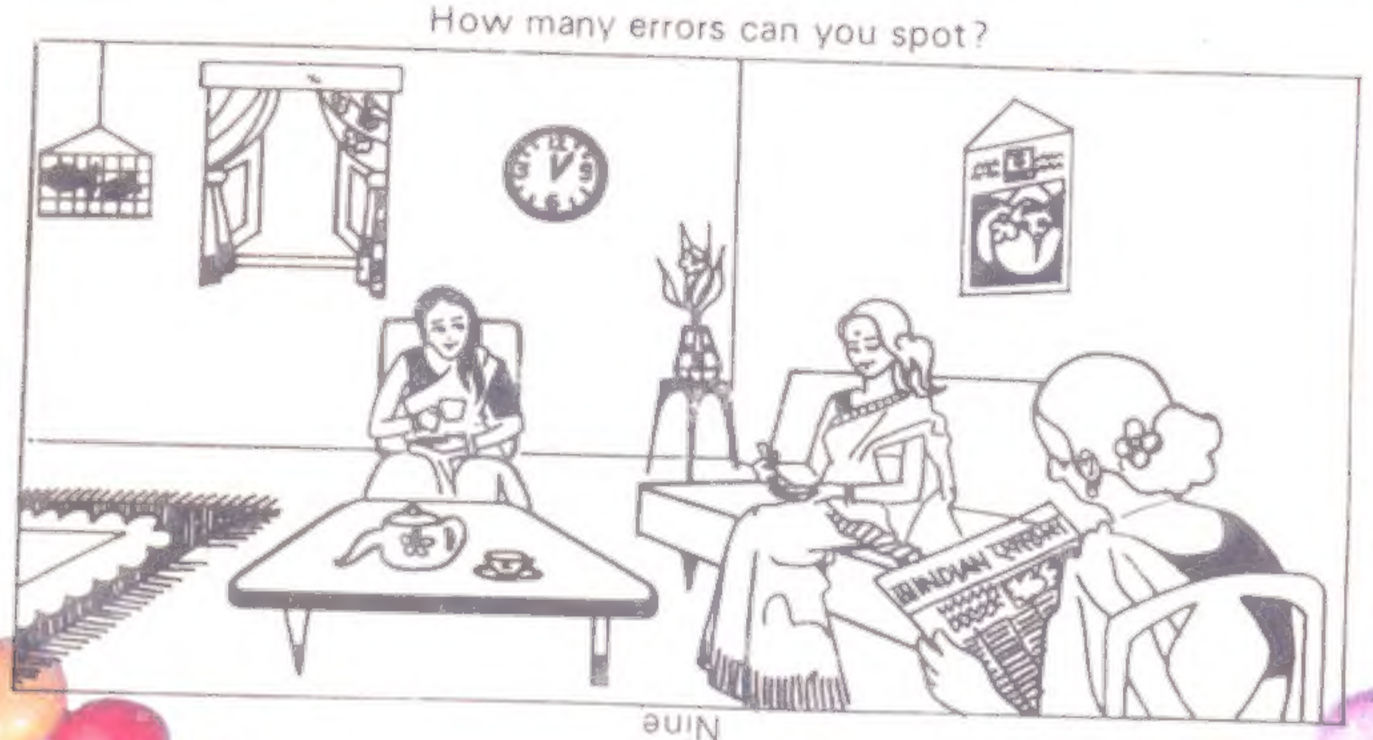

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